



STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
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CONSUMER PROTECTION DIVISION
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Press Release

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**ATTORNEY GENERAL DARRELL V. MCGRAW, JR.
WARNS CONSUMERS TO BE ON THE LOOK OUT FOR
UNSCRUPULOUS PAVERS GOING DOOR-TO-DOOR
THROUGHOUT WEST VIRGINIA**

During the last several weeks, Attorney General Darrell McGraw's Consumer Protection Division has been inundated with complaints about pavers who have ripped off consumers throughout West Virginia. Apparently, several paving outfits have been going door-to-door in several counties in West Virginia offering to pave consumers' driveways with asphalt they claim has been left over from another job. Because the asphalt is left over, the scam artist tells the consumer he can do the job for a steep discount.

Once the work is done, the paving outfit demands large amounts of money, which were not part of the original deal. "The vast majority of victims have been elderly. Consumers feel intimidated and generally pay whatever is demanded. In addition, the quality of the work is shoddy. Frequently, the asphalt washes away after the first rain," said Attorney General McGraw.

In 1997, the Attorney General's office sued Huey Small, a Mercer County man, who entered neighborhoods with his truck loads of leftover asphalt. Small convinced consumers to get their driveways paved, then demanded large amounts of cash, up front, saying that the price had gone up. Attorney General McGraw won the case in 1998, and chased Small for years to collect on a judgment. In May of last year, investigators in the Attorney General's office worked with the State Police and the Mercer County Sheriff to find and arrest Small in Princeton, West Virginia. Small remained in jail until he agreed to pay the Attorney General's office \$500 a month until each and every West Virginian is provided with a full refund. Apparently, the outfit that recently surfaced is using the same scam.

To date, the Attorney General's office has received complaints from Ritchie, Webster, Mason, Randolph, and Wood counties. Tips to follow before hiring a contractor are:

1. avoid door-to-door work crews, who often pose as contractors from another job with left over materials, like gravel or roofing supplies;
2. avoid a contractor that can only be reached by leaving a message on an answering machine;
3. avoid a contractor that drives an unmarked van or has an out of state license plate on his vehicle;
4. avoid a contractor that pressures you for an immediate decision;

5. avoid a contractor that offers you a discount for finding him other customers;

6. avoid a contractor that quotes a price that is too cheap;

7. pay by check or credit card and avoid on the spot cash payments if possible;

8. do not take the contractor's word that he has a valid contractor's license. Rather, check with the West Virginia Contractor's Licensing Board.

The Contractor's Licensing Board's telephone number is 304)558-7890.

If you have been approached by one of these pavers, please report the matter as quickly as possible to your local police, to the State police or to the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division at 1-800-368-8808 or 304-558-8986.

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